Editors’ Note: Association of Self-reflection With Cognition and Brain Health in Cognitively Unimpaired Older Adults

Dr. Demnitz-King et al. examined the association between self-reflection and markers sensitive to Alzheimer disease in 125 older adults with subjective cognitive decline and compared them with 134 cognitively unimpaired older adults in the Age-Well clinical trial. They found that self-reflection was associated with better global cognition and higher glucose metabolism in fluorodeoxyglucose positron emission tomography scans, with weak evidence that the observed associations were independent of other health and lifestyle behaviors. They concluded that longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to clarify whether self-reflection can actually help preserve cognition and cerebral glucose metabolism vs whether a lower capacity to self-reflect is a harbinger of cognitive decline and glucose hypometabolism. In response, Dr. Daly notes that the study overlooked social determinants of brain health and behaviors including those associated with self-reflection and argues that studying such determinants is potentially a higher priority for dementia research than interventional studies. Responding to these comments, the authors note that they found a higher education (an important social determinant) was associated with better self-reflection, but that the associations between self-reflection and the study outcomes remained after adjusting for education. They also report additional analyses examining the relationship between self-reflection and loneliness as well as primary occupation. They found that loneliness was associated with self-reflection, but incorporating loneliness as an additional covariate in their models did not change the associations of self-reflection with cognition and glucose metabolism. The authors counter that these findings suggest that there is utility in targeting self-reflection but agree that there may be promise in addressing such individual risk or protective factors within the broader context of social determinants of brain health. This exchange underscores the challenges of making causal inferences about protective behaviors from studies of cognitive decline or dementia-related markers, and the complexities involved in setting priorities for dementia prevention research based on such data.

Aravind Ganesh, MD, DPhil, FRCP, and Steven Galetta, MD
Neurology® 2023;100:261. doi:10.1212/WNL.0000000000206812

Reader Response: Association of Self-reflection With Cognition and Brain Health in Cognitively Unimpaired Older Adults

Timothy Daly (Paris)
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I have some issues with the claim of Demnitz-King and colleagues that longitudinal and interventional studies are warranted to explicate whether self-reflection helps preserve cognition in older adults. Their assertion draws on the association of self-reflection with better global cognition and glucose metabolism and limited evidence that relationships are independent from health and lifestyle behaviors. The authors use a modified lifestyle for brain health (LIBRA) index, which provides a dementia risk score defined by empirical evidence and expert consensus.
This claim of warrant is a value judgment calling for further investment of research resources into their hypothesis and should be stated thus, rather than its current formulation as an objective fact. In addition, the study overlooks the social determinants of brain health and behaviors such as self-reflection. Röhr et al.\(^2\) found strong associations between the social determinants of dementia—socioeconomic factors, in particular—and the LIBRA index.

Studying the social determinants of self-reflection is arguably a higher priority for dementia research than interventional studies. Given the recognized possibility that reduced capacity to self-reflect is indicative of cognitive decline,\(^1\) focusing only on individual behaviors and overlooking environmental drivers of reduced self-reflection strikes me as akin to fixing a leaky tap in a population-wide flood of dementia risk.


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Author Response: Association of Self-reflection With Cognition and Brain Health in Cognitively Unimpaired Older Adults

Harriet Demnitz-King (London) and Natalie L. Marchant (London)

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We appreciate Dr. Daly’s valuable comments on our article,\(^1\) and we would like to respond to the interesting point raised about social determinants of brain health. Our article reported a positive association between education and self-reflection, yet associations between self-reflection and Alzheimer disease (AD)-sensitive markers remained after adjusting for education.

We have now conducted additional analyses examining the relationship between self-reflection and loneliness (our closest approximation of social isolation) and primary occupation. Since 93% of participants were retired, employment status was not examined as a determinant.

Only loneliness was associated with self-reflection. We, therefore, included loneliness as an additional covariate in our models examining the relationship between self-reflection and AD-sensitive markers. Associations between self-reflection and cognition (SCD-Well: adjusted-\(\beta = 0.16, p = 0.042\); Age-Well: adjusted-\(\beta = 0.21, p = 0.025\)) and glucose metabolism (adjusted-\(\beta = 0.28, p = 0.043\)) remained unchanged.

Of the social determinants examined, not all were associated with self-reflection. Furthermore, the association of self-reflection with AD-sensitive markers persisted even after considering several social determinants of brain health. We, therefore, suggest that there is utility in targeting self-reflection. However, we do agree with Dr. Daly and propose that incorporating individual risk/protective factors within the wider context of social determinants of brain health may be a promising way to stem the tide of dementia risk.


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Leonhard et al. analyzed the pattern of preceding infections in a large cohort of 768 patients with Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) from 19 countries spread over 5 continents. To some extent, this study is biased because the majority of the patients were from temperate regions and testing for preceding infections was limited to only 5 microorganisms (Campylobacter jejuni,
hepatitis E virus, *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, cytomegalovirus, and Epstein-Barr virus). The burden of infections varies significantly across tropical and temperate regions, with arboviral infections being quite prevalent in the tropics. Dengue, chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, and zika have consistently been associated with GBS.\(^2\)\(^4\)

In our recent study, *C. jejuni*, dengue, and chikungunya were associated with GBS; however, the number of patients with GBS seropositive for chikungunya was much higher than *C. jejuni* (66.7% vs 32%).\(^5\) Therefore, the findings by Leonhard et al. may not truly reflect the international occurrence rate. A balanced study design with an examination of a wider infection panel including arboviruses, increased representation of patients with GBS from tropical countries, particularly India and China, and simultaneous testing of population controls selected from the same period will add strength to the current understanding of the interplay between infections and development of GBS.


**Author Response: An International Perspective on Preceding Infections in Guillain-Barré Syndrome: The IGOS-1000 Cohort**

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We thank the readers for their comments on our article.\(^1\) The results of the International Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) Outcome Study (IGOS) do not reflect GBS statistics worldwide. We focused on 5 pathogens consistently associated with GBS in case-control studies and found similar distributions across participating countries including Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Japan.\(^1\) In 59% of patients, no evidence of infection was found, which suggests other triggers.

In the study from South India, recent *Campylobacter jejuni* infection was identified in ~30% of patients, similar to the findings in IGOS.\(^1,2\) The study suggests chikungunya, dengue, and Japanese encephalitis virus as triggers of GBS in endemic areas. It notes evidence of chikungunya in 67% of patients but also in 45% of controls, whereas the proportion of dengue and Japanese encephalitis virus was lower in patients than controls.\(^2\) Evidence of multiple infections was found in 66%, vs 6% of patients in IGOS.\(^1,2\) This may indicate true coinfections, but it may also reflect cross-reactive antibodies, especially for flaviviruses, due to other flavivirus prior infection or vaccination.\(^3\) This is further exemplified by the finding that all dengue immunoglobulin M-positives were also positive for other agents. Exposure to GBS-related infections varies in region and time, and controlled studies to identify these infections can best occur through long-standing international collaboration.


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CORRECTIONS

Gender Representation Among Physician Authors of Practice Guidelines Developed, Endorsed, or Affirmed by the American Academy of Neurology

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In the Research Article previously titled "Gender Representation Among Physician Authors of American Academy of Neurology Clinical Practice Guidelines" by Ross et al., several changes were made after online-first publication of the accepted manuscript before final publication. The article title was revised, along with the titles of Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. Wording changes were made throughout the article, along with the additions of new paragraphs in the Results and Discussion, an eAppendix, the "Subanalysis of AAN Developed PGs" subsection, and Figure 5 in the Results. The authors regret the confusion.

Reference


Impulsivity Trait Profiles in Patients With Cerebellar Ataxia and Parkinson Disease

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In the Research Article "Impulsivity Trait Profiles in Patients With Cerebellar Ataxia and Parkinson Disease" by Chen et al., Figure 2A should be labeled "First-order factors: CA vs control." The editorial staff regret the error.

Reference


Association Between Anatomical Location of Surgically Induced Lesions and Postoperative Seizure Outcome in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy

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In the Research Article "Association Between Anatomical Location of Surgically Induced Lesions and Postoperative Seizure Outcome in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy" by Gleichgerrcht et al., Dr. Bernd Weber was inadvertently omitted as an author. The article has now been replaced by a corrected version with Dr. Weber included. Dr. Weber’s full disclosures may be viewed at Neurology.org/N. The original version with the changes highlighted is available from a link in the corrected article. The authors regret the omission.

Reference
